ŒDIPUS & THE SCIENCE OF MYTH

"Science is the criticism of Myth. There would be no Darwin had there been no Book of Genesis, no electron but for the Greek atomic myth; & when the fire of criticism is finished there is not even a drift of ashes on the pyre. Sexual desire dies because every touch consumes the Myth, & yet a Myth that can not be so consumed becomes a spectre [William Butler Yeats to Thomas Sturge Moore (spring 1929), in *W. B. Yeats & T. Sturge Moore: Their Correspondence, 1931–1937* edited by Ursula Bridge, 1953: Routledge & Kegan Paul]."

Preface

Scholars have long despaired of ever finding the ancient code behind myth. Their search for insight amid the surviving remains has thus taken concessionary forms, engendering doctrinaire disciplines like philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology, theology & linguistics. This paper questions conclusions from those researches, showing that their resulting misinterpretation of the historical record has crippled humanity with imaginary things that aren't real, including 'god', 'spirit', 'soul', 'afterlife' & 'religion'. Neither Humanistic nor Marxist, it advances insights based on the recent discovery of the key to ancient myth; concluding with the decipherment of several well-known myths from different cultures, that prove the validity of the thesis. The meaning of myth has too long been shrouded in the stifling cawl of faith, to remain buried beneath the sands of superstition any further, now that the key's been found. Having left their scar on history, the spectres of 'god' & 'religion' can at long last relinquish their choke-hold on posterity. Nick Drumbolis

Are thoughts just dreams?

We inherit myth; & because even its earliest heirs failed to understand most myths, we've also inherited *their* attempts at interpretation – guesswork devolved on posterity as 'tradition'. Were the myths imaginary? allegorical? or just plain superstition? Whatever their source, we now also have to contend, for example, with the widely-held assumption that: 'the Œdipus myth epitomizes libidinous man's repressed desire for his mother'. A focal 'cautionary tale' – dramatically reinterpreted by Classical Greek tragedians of the fifth century BC from archaic sources – interpreted anew in 1886 by a 30-year-old watching a Sophoclean play in Paris.

Retelling the tale of a myth presents the action involved, but not necessarily the topic addressed. At a distance, two people arguing about a dog look the same as two people arguing over religion, the nature of their dispute lost in pantomime. In the case of distant Œdipus, the story has nothing to do with incest.

Though most people never question the origin of such concepts, historical interpretations of unrevealed myth & symbol prove to be the primary source of such modern conceptions as 'matriarchy', 'patriarchy', 'polytheism', 'monotheism' & concepts like 'spirit', 'soul', 'afterlife', 'heaven' & 'hell'. More questionable guesswork that history has talked us into adding to our vocabulary & our sense of reality.

'Perception' is 'what you think you see' – the percept, purely an idea stored in memory identifying things. We identify with things by identifying them; giving them names & properties. Concepts however aren't things. They don't reside as such in the world; only in our heads. A fridge is a thing; refrigeration, its concept. We're not born with concepts, they're introduced as we grow. A fridge can be distinguished from a bone by a dog, while the concept of the soul goes over his head. Though concepts like 'spirit', 'soul' & 'transcendence' *appear* to permeate history, their origins are seldom sought & their validity seldom questioned.

As life's putative 'essence', the soul has long been thought to endure beyond death, either individually among other souls in the afterworld – before being purportedly reincarnated – or absorbed in a solution of 'universal intelligence' (the godhead, logos, overmind, akashic record, *etc*). It's no coincidence that 19th-century spiritualism with its 'quest of the overself' during the rise of esoteric philosophy, was the century in which psychological explanations of history took root. Ultimately resulting in the sympathetic conception of a 'collective unconscious' stuffed with 'archetypes', identified as 'universal patterns of thought' – drawn, predictably, from 'recurring motifs' in myth, symbol & ancient scripture (our undeciphered past). More second-hand baggage for an impressionable posterity.

Most of us know what concepts like 'spirit', 'soul' & 'transcendence' refer to, but few question where they originated. It's generally assumed they exist because they always have. But have they? Is there something called a soul? Can we really transcend conditions? Or were these possibly expedient deductions? – 'intentional perceptions' generating their own reality!

If you trace these concepts back through time you find art, artifacts, symbols, emblems & texts that appear to conform to our current understanding of 'spirit', 'soul' & 'religion'. However without delving deeper, you can't really be sure these survivals didn't describe something else back in their day.

References to the 'ka' & 'ba' which survive dynastic Egypt, may *appear* to provide ancient evidence for the existence of the spirit & the soul (though this proves only that the concepts were active, whatever they may have been based upon).* And we've long been told that primitive cultures† also believed in god & spirit (based on *their* myths, rites & symbols); though how conclusively *that* might substantiate the existence of a Creator, for example, is offset by the comparably primitive, yet more recent example of the Cargo Cults (who prayed to the god of a fridge).

* see Flinders Petrie, *Personal Religion in Egypt Before Christianity* (1909: Harper).

† Though an equitable appraisal of primitive culture foregrounds the existential human aspect over organizational & economic social advances achieved throughout our progress from family, band & tribe, to nation, the dominant measure of cultural advancement down the years has long been the ability to accurately tell time. The evidence shows that a global pursuit of accurate lunar mechanics, has led to more than a few technological & cultural advances, including horticulture & domestication (arising from the recognition of the role sperm plays in procreation). Conversely, cultures preserving age-old customs & superstitions are not only culturally, but actually behind the times. Tribal chauvinism proves regressive to an integrated society where laws protect all citizens equally (ideally), even strangers who lack rights in tribes. Gang mentality, in this respect, sustains tribal impulse.

In other words, belief in 'spirit' or 'soul' may be no less delusional than belief in 'god'. A delusion, however, shared by a majority of history's most influential thinkers – fostered, as the evidence shows, on mistaken assumptions about ancient myth. While many today dismiss 'religion' as superstition, few appreciate that 'spirit' and 'soul' are likewise purely inventions of antiquity. A model of the world without 'god' or 'governing intelligence' might seem scientifically viable to many, but one without 'spirit' or 'universal mind', inconceivable.

"To understand soul we cannot turn to science for a description. Its meaning is best given by its context. The root metaphor of the analyst's point of view is that **human behavior is understandable because it has an inside meaning.** *The inside meaning is suffered and experienced. It is understood by the analyst through sympathy & insight. All these terms are the everyday empirical language of the analyst & provide the context for & are expressions of the analyst's root metaphor. Other words long associated with the word soul amplify it further: mind, spirit, heart, life, warmth, humanness, personality, individuality, intentionality, essence, innermost, purpose, emotion, quality, virtue, morality, sin, wisdom, death, God....The soul has been imagined as the inner man, & the inner sister or spouse, the place or voice of God*

within, as a cosmic force in which all humans, even all things living, participate, as having been given by God & thus divine, as conscience, as a multiplicity & as a unity in diversity, as a harmony, as a fluid, as fire, as dynamic energy, & so on [James Hillman, 'The Poetic Basis of Mind' in *A Blue Fire: Selected Writings,* 1989: HarperCollins, pp19/20]."

As a legacy concept, in contrast, 'spirit' assumes the proportions of a 'generated reality' we seldom question or examine as our culture advances. Yet 'personal feelings' that seem to confirm the concept of 'spirit' have been alternately identified by psychologists, for instance, as 'emotion' & 'projection'; while spiritual 'experience' is likewise linked to the emotional or pathic complex (sympathy, empathy or antipathy). Philosophers subsume 'sympathetic impulse' within the category of 'ethics'; yet the ethics monotheists hold as the paramount advancement of 'spiritual or religious enlightenment', derive in fact from **a civil law code,** *recycled* in the Bible from Hammurabi (modelled on the codes of his Sumerian antecedents, Ur-Nammu & Urukagina).

"Whereas Jung's psychology focused on the Self, its dynamics & its constellations (ego, anima, animus, shadow), Hillman's Archetypal psychology – [which] *relativizes & de-literalizes the ego & focuses on psyche, or soul, & the archai,* the deepest patterns of psychic functioning, **'the fundamental fantasies that animate all life'** *– is not a psychology of archetypes. Its primary activity is not 'matching themes in mythology & art' to similar 'themes in life'. Rather, the idea is to see every fragment of life & every dream as myth & poetry* [Stephen Farah reviewing *A Blue Fire* by James Hillman for the Center of Applied Jungian Studies]."

A departure from Jung that however sustains the uncertain postulate that ancient myth was the product of dreamlike phantasms (precluding a possible *material* origin or relevance). Those who categorically consider myths 'themes' or 'fantasies', fail to recognize that by doing so, they discount the possibility that myth may initially have been conceived as a representation of something other than dreams – a coded expression of something Natural, not supernatural (material, rather than imaginary).

Plato, who likewise puzzled over the ancient myths, conceived similar dreamworld distinctions about Man, based on his belief in a transcendent realm. The Platonic rationale for 'the existence of a higher realm' – a cosmology, justified in part on the premise that 'geometrical figures are supernal principles' accessible solely through the divine perfection of mind – arguably *epitomizes* the perception & reception of 'this concept of a higher realm' among other ancient cultures, before & after him: 'an imperishably ideal realm of perfection' intimated & affirmed by 'the perfect figures of geometry' which one never encounters naturally here on earth.

The 'soul', in this model, is considered preternaturally 'native to that transcendent realm' – & merely 'on loan to the body'. *"The writer of the Wisdom of Solomon* [first century BC] *describes the soul as existing before it is placed in the body, which is but an earthly tabernacle for the heavenly Nous, & must restore the soul like a loan* [Norman Bentwich, *Hellenism,* 1919: The Jewish Publication Society of America, p151]."

The Christian Trinity likewise drew on the complementary Platonic distinctions of generative (*phanes*), regenerative (*logos*) & perpetual (*sophia*) inception; extrapolated in a physical matrix as body (*soma*), mind (*nous*) & soul (*psyche*); & in an abstract context as inspiration (*thesis*), knowledge (*gnosis*) & wisdom (*nœsis*). Imposing the prevailing Academic view of 'intellectual hierarchy' on a compliant posterity – which ultimately generated the philosophical divisions (physics, logic & ethics) & the psychoanalytical structure of 'psyche' (ego, superego & id); beyond the phenomenological postulate of a 'cognitive relay' (recept–percept–concept).

Philosophy developed initially from the need to explain the legacy of baffling myths inherited from those archaic Hellenic sources (Homer, Hesiod & earlier); enigmatic accounts involving apparently naive beliefs.

The inability of the early heirs to make sense of inherited myth, prompted their revolutionary recourse to 'observation' & 'analysis' in attempting to explain the Nature, & speculate on the origin, of our material world (rather than puzzle any further over fables). This view of 'the inception of Philosophy' adds nuance to its modern conception as 'a critique of language' (through those early philosophers' rejection of 'a literal reading' of myth).

The question of 'god' was freshly exposed to 'reason' – arguments for & against the possible existence of a Creator replacing primitive fables, among the earliest scholars. The reliance of Natural philosophers on 'empirical evidence' & 'probative reason', however led others to question the validity of 'idea' & 'conclusion'; ultimately reducing Natural philosophy to a study of physics, in the shadow of their objection – the 'essence of thing' epistemologically overshadowed by the 'essence of think'.

Among the earliest philosophers, Thales had focused on 'the origin of matter' in his ontological quest to demystify the past; while his erstwhile pupil Pythagoras floated the opposing ideal of 'permanent form' over 'perishable nature' (epitomized in 'an immortal soul' prefiguring 'appearances'). The 'material world' empirically knowable through the senses; in opposition to an 'immaterial realm' accessible through the perfection of thought. 'Mind governed by matter' versus 'matter superseded by mind' (an evanescent reality presumed to transcend corporeality – with 'immortality' the ultimate aim of frail mortals).

"He showed that all things follow the heavens...and demonstrated that the deliberative power of the soul possesses free will...[*while discussing*] *the perfect energy of reason & intellect* [Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras, or Pythagoric Life* translated by Thomas Taylor, 1818: A.J. Valpy, p112]."

'Free will' which led men to sin, according to later theologists; raising the question 'why a perfect god in an ideal realm might bridle his most soulful creation with imperfection'. Nine hundred years later, Augustine composed his philosophical dialogue on free will, predisposed to the belief that original sin was the result of carnal knowledge (his libidinous past arguably sowing his bias). Thus prefiguring Freud, in interpreting another pivotal myth – Adam & Eve in the Garden of Eden – in carnal terms.

Taking their cue from the epistemological objection, modern scholars have also extended the '*unconscious* element in philosophy' to ancient myth. Assessing the historical writings of Thucydides, for example, Francis Cornford saw the episodes Thucydides had *chosen* to record & emphasize in his work, as unavoidably governed by his philosophy or understanding of life. Consolidating the modern scholarly fixation on the '*unconscious* heritage of the past' – which inevitably foregrounds psychological motives.

The point here is that from its outset, psychology was not only based on a faulty premise – myth having recently been recognized as something other than a product of the imagination – but on rashly speculative behavioural distinctions (*imposing* rather than *exposing* the meaning of myth). The 'behavioural bias' toward a subconscious, unconscious or 'collective unconscious' basis to myth, has imposed its authority over these otherwise improbable narratives so comprehensively, as to cloak modern impressions of the past in a psychological straightjacket.

Psychoanalysis developed in part from Freud's behavioural interpretation of an ancient myth; not unlike the earlier reaction of Classical philosophers to the same 'superstitious tales', which led to their *rational* quest for 'the essence of things'. Myth, in other words, forms the basis of both disciplines; & its newly uncovered original meaning, thus presents sobering consequences for both.

Formulated in the summer of 1897 – a decade after seeing *Œdipus Rex* staged in Paris – the concept of an Œdipus Complex was introduced in Freud's influential classic *Die Traumdeutung* (1900: Franz Deuticke, Leipzig & Wien); subsequently translated as *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1913: Macmillan).

"In the following pages, I shall demonstrate that there exists a psychological technique by which dreams may be interpreted and that upon the application of this method every dream will show itself to be a senseful psychological structure which may be introduced into an assignable place in the psychic activity of the waking state. I shall furthermore endeavor to explain the processes which give rise to the strangeness and obscurity of the dream, and to discover through them the psychic forces, which operate whether in combination or opposition, to produce the dream. This accomplished by investigation will terminate as it will reach the point where the problem of the dream meets broader problems, the solution of which must be attempted through other material. According to my already extensive experience, parents play a leading part in the infantile psychology of all persons who subsequently become psychoneurotics. Falling in love with one parent and hating the other forms part of the permanent stock of the psychic impulses which arise in early childhood, and are of such importance as the material of the subsequent neurosis. But I do not believe that psychoneurotics are to be sharply distinguished in this respect from other persons who remain normal – that is, I do not believe that they are capable of creating something absolutely new and peculiar to themselves. It is far more probable – and this is confirmed by incidental observations of normal children – that in their amorous or hostile attitude toward their parents, psychoneurotics do no more than reveal to us, by magnification, something that occurs less markedly and intensively in the minds of the majority of children. Antiquity has furnished us with legendary matter which corroborates this belief, and the profound and **universal validity of the old legends is explicable only by an equally universal validity of the above-mentioned hypothesis of infantile psychology.** *I am referring to the legend of King Œdipus and the* Œdipus Rex *of Sophocles* [Dr Sigm. Freud, *Die Traumdeutung,* 1900: Franz Deuticke, Leipzig & Wien, 600 copies issued 4 November 1899; the third edition first translated into English by Abraham Arden Brill as *The Interpretation of Dreams* by Prof Dr Sigmund Freud LLD, 1913: Macmillan, pp85/6]*."*

It becomes apparent that both philosophy & psychology remain at base, expedient yet flawed responses to ancient myth. Philosophy abandoning the cryptic accounts in favour of an empirical & rational quest for knowledge; psychology summoning emotional or behavioural origins for the ancient tales.

The psychological assertion that myth might represent incipient figments & phantasms in the mind, was subsequently bolstered through the modern recognition that 'primitive mammalian responses' appear to survive in the lower parts of the evolved, fully-formed brain (producing 'vestigial ideation' prone to interrupt 'neocortical activity' like 'reason', under stress). This precept of 'latent memory' advanced by the 'triune-brain' theory (based on a neuroscientific model composed of the Reptilian Complex, Limbic System & Neocortex) found a complement in the 'bicameral-mind' theory drawn from commissurotomy experiments – opposed analogical & logical hemispheres of the brain registering mutually exclusive impressions (instilling schizophrenic-like cognition in the unwitting individual). The late historical development of cerebral commissures connecting the hemispheres of the evolving hominid brain, led to the theory that cognition in one half of the cortex (before that development was complete), may have been perceived – or hallucinated – as intrusive 'spirits', 'gods' or 'monsters', by the yet-to-be-connected other half. A theory instigated by the inexplicability of myth – which conveniently corroborated the psychological model of myth's 'latency in mind'. Though both theories soon lost favour, the point is that they provided a biological basis for the claims of psychology.

Contrary to psychological consensus, however – not to mention neuroscientific speculation – 'the universal fund of recurrent concepts & ideas' was not in fact *native* to the 'psyche' (as presumed), but rather cultivated & imported throughout history as 'mistaken guesses about the meaning of myth'. The 'collective unconscious' would thus have no more currency as the source of myth, than the 'archetype' (or the 'psyche'); though Jung emphasized the 'presence' over the 'meaning' of psychic images.

In his lecture 'The Structure of the Unconscious' – first published in 1916 in French under the title 'La Structure de l'Inconscient' in Archives de Psychologie XVI (pp152–79) & a year later in English as 'The Conception of the Unconscious' in *Collected Papers on Analytical Psychology* – Carl Jung proposed a

division of the unconscious into distinct 'personal' & 'collective' strata (to accommodate 'subliminal perceptions' underlying the layer of 'repressed juvenile tendencies', focused on by Freud). This 'collective unconscious' purportedly encompassed 'the soul of humanity' comprising instincts he termed 'archetypes' – innate symbols understood from birth in all people. A construct that he claimed further helped explain 'common themes occurring in myth' (intimating a 'putative source').

"And the essential thing, psychologically, is that in dreams, fantasies, and other exceptional states of mind the most far-fetched mythological motifs and symbols can appear autochthonously at any time, often, apparently, as the result of particular influences, traditions, and excitations working on the individual, but more often without any sign of them. These 'primordial images' or 'archetypes,' as I have called them, belong to the basic stock of the unconscious psyche and cannot be explained as personal acquisitions. Together they make up that psychic stratum which has been called the collective unconscious. The primordial images are the most ancient and the most universal 'thought-forms' of humanity. They are as much feelings as thoughts; indeed, they lead their own independent life rather in the manner of part-souls, as can easily be seen in those philosophical or Gnostic systems which rely on perception of the unconscious as the source of knowledge. The idea of angels, archangels, 'principalities and powers' in St Paul, the archons of the Gnostics, the heavenly hierarchy of Dionysius the Areopagite, all come from the perception of the relative autonomy of the archetypes. We have now found the object which the libido chooses when it is freed from the personal, infantile form of transference. It follows its own gradient down into the depths of the unconscious, and there activates what has lain slumbering from the beginning. It has discovered the hidden treasure upon which mankind ever and anon has drawn, **and from which it has raised up its gods and demons,** *and all those potent and mighty thoughts without which man ceases to be man* [Carl Jung, 'The Personal and the Collective Unconscious' in *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology,* pp66–9]*."*

In a later lecture (1937) he appeared to distance himself from the question of the origin of myth. *"Since religion is incontestably one of the earliest & most universal expressions of the human mind, it is obvious that any psychology which touches upon the psychological structure of human personality cannot avoid taking note of the fact that religion is not only a sociological & historical phenomenon, but also something of considerable personal concern to a great number of individuals. Although I have often been called a philosopher, I am an empricist & adhere to the pheonomenological standpoint....I approach psychological matters from a scientific & not from a philosophical standpoint. Inasmuch as religion has a very important psychological aspect, I deal with it from a purely empirical point of view, that is, I restrict myself to the observation of phenomena & I eschew any metaphysical or philosophical considerations....***The standpoint is exclusively phenomenological,** *that is, is concerned with occurrences, events, experiences – in a word, with facts. Its truth is a fact & not a judgment. When psychology speaks, for instance, of the motif of the virgin birth, it is only concerned with the fact that there is such an idea, but it is not concerned with the question whether such an idea is true or false in any other sense. The idea is psychologically true inasmuch as it exists. Psychological existence is subjective in so far as an idea occurs in only one individual. But it is objective in so far as that idea is shared by a society by a* consensus gentium ['The Autonomy of the Unconscious' in *Psychology & Religion: West & East* C.G. Jung, pp5–33]."

In other words, the *meaning* of the 'virgin birth' is irrelevant or at best, incidental to its evaluation in psychoanalysis. A clarification – if the statement in his lecture was one – that however ignores the separate issue of the psychological effect 'a mistaken impression of its original meaning' might potentially have on a psyche harbouring a literal interpretation (affording motivation in the 'misled' psyche, for the concept of 'god'). Jung's description of the 'collective unconscious' as the primordial source of mythological motifs & symbols such as 'gods', 'demons', 'angels', 'archangels' *etc,* rings true only if the ancient myths were in fact products of a 'collective unconscious' & not something natural (as has recently been revealed). Something in fact observable, expressed however allegorically (out of necessity). His argument invokes a premise dependent on a conclusion.

James Hillman defends the phenomenological fixation on 'image' – in contrast to the empiricist's focus on 'what is' – in maintaining that it is the psyche that creates reality every day (outward reality proving essentially unknowable). The phenomenologist allows phenomena to first have their say, to let the voices of the past speak – that deep polytheistic heritage we often ignore – in our personal search for image rather than meaning. Quoting Auden's *"We are lived by powers we pretend to understand",* he supports Jung's claim that the language of psychology is imagistic, poetic, pre-dialectical & pre-logical.

Yet a literal reading of myth – the powers that live us – leaves a different impression than an allegorical reading; the disparate images they summon, producing divergent consequences. Where the allegorical reading proves accurate, the literal image deceives – as with the myth of Œdipus whose complexity (regarding lunar cycle), is still less convoluted than the psychoanalytical Complex ascribed to it. A literal reading of the Œdipus myth moreover, fails to explain such complications as his lameness (though Sándor Ferenczi equated the swollen foot with an erect penis); the significance of producing two daughters & two sons; his sons' dispute over the throne; & the bifocal solution to the riddle of the Sphinx. Which an allegorical reading based on an understanding of lunar measure, readily explains (*see Œdipus & the Science of Myth* Part Two: *Proof that the Bible Is Not About God).*

The words we use as percepts, & in concepts, not only have meaning but point to something signified, something intended. Compounded on the untested presumption that 'abstracts are arbitrary', the modern detour around 'intention' in 'subjective analysis' merely enshrines degeneracy as a methodological default. History's failure to disclose the intention behind the myths is hardly reason for abandoning the quest for 'intention' in text. We've too long been bridled with a daunting tradition of cryptic precepts & symbols that sentence the creative imagination to the fate of a baggage handler, when left unidentified. Those who default to the premise that the author's 'intention' is categorically irrecoverable & analytically immaterial – based on the concession that 'abstracts are arbitrary' – fail to consider the lunar basis of our prime abstract, the Alphabet.

Calling the moon 'god' doesn't prove there's a god. Similarly focusing inquiry on 'the names we call things' rather than on the things themselves, leads astray. In the case of myth, one must first learn the lunar lexicon to get at what the tales are pointing out. The phenomenological approach may be useful in considering phenomena – on the premise that all knowledge is unavoidably mediated through the use of abstracts like letters, symbols, percepts & concepts, *etc* – but isn't the most reliable means of understanding literature. Particularly 'text encoding lunar mechanics' – denoting a scientific rather than a philosophical or social construct.

Notwithstanding Heisenberg's demonstration that 'perception is intentional', truth is 'what happens' not what you say or think happens. While the licence of 'indeterminacy' has led to the solipsistic insistency of 'my truth' & 'your truth' (as if we all invent the outside world), it's the lexicon of one's inherited beliefs governing those 'truths', that impedes an accurate understanding of what exists beyond us. Truth is not of us, but outside of us. *"To resolve Nature into abstractions is less to our purpose than to dissect her into parts* [Francis Bacon, 'Aphorism 51' in *Novum Organum or The New Organon or True Directions Concerning the Interpretation of Nature,* 1620: John Bill]."

The misunderstanding of myth is at the heart of this problem. A study of myth & its interpretations throughout history, leaves little doubt that those abiding by literal, analogical, numerological or psychological explanations of inherited myth & custom, continue to distort truth in the service of tradition. Myth was inherited long before it ever grew 'inherent'.

Authorities like Carl Kerényi approached the subject in a similar way, corroborating Jung's contention that myth could be 'scientifically' interpreted as 'archetypes of the human soul' (in their concerted push to make myth 'science'). He writes in 'The Mythological Strain in Greek Religion' – the opening chapter of *The Religion of the Greeks & Romans* (1962) – that myth is *"still alive, fixed but at the same time in*

motion, capable of transformation. It can be transformed...in the mind of the story-teller himself [p19]*."* A premise founded on the expedient conclusion that the original meaning of myth was presumably fluid. Which is why I generally avoid citing 'surveys of the contributive literature' by affiliated – *ie,* similarly afflicted – Eranos scholars, who advance this same premise. As in the case of Joseph Campbell, for example, who stressed the *indispensable* value of psychoanalysis, in his famous study of the Hero:

"What is the secret of the timeless vision? From what profundity of the mind does it derive? Why is mythology everywhere the same, beneath its varieties of costume? And what does it teach? Today many sciences are contributing to the analysis of the riddle. Archæologists are probing the ruins of Iraq, Honan, Crete, and Yucatan. Ethnologists are questioning the Ostiaks of the river Ob, the Boobies of Fernando Po. A generation of orientalists has recently thrown open to us the sacred writings of the East, as well as the pre-Hebrew sources of our own Holy Writ. And meanwhile another host of scholars, pressing researches begun last century in the field of folk psychology, has been seeking to establish the psychological bases of language, myth, religion, art development, and moral codes. Most remarkable of all, however, are the revelations that have emerged from the mental clinic. **The bold and truly epoch making writings of the psychoanalysts are indispensable to the student of mythology;** *for, whatever may be thought of the detailed and sometimes contradictory interpretations of specific cases and problems, Freud, Jung, and their followers have demonstrated irrefutably that the logic, the heroes, and the deeds of myth survive* into *modern times* [Joseph Campbell, 'Myth & Dream' in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces,* p4]*."* Appending Freud's coup-de-grâce: *"All neurotics are either Œdipus or Hamlet* [p7]*."*

James Hillman went even further in his abandonment of the question of 'meaning in myth', preferring instead to concentrate psychological analysis on the creative *play* of inherent motifs (characterized as 'the imaginative activity of the soul'). Drawing on Jung's contention that the imagination is the creative or reproductive faculty of mind – a mind conceiving 'imaginative forms & figures' rather than words – he anoints fantasy as the direct expression of psychic life (with 'image' governing 'emotion'); emphasizing that the rational Aristotelian / Cartesian approach to comprehension, too often ignores the 'emotional vitality' of the psyche's figures, forms & fantasies.

Thereby preserving the gratuitous concept of 'soul' or 'psyche' amid the undigested mythological motifs; while dismissing the question of 'meaning' in favour of 'image'. Surely heads full of undigested fables – which psychiatrists have long welcomed as the 'source' of neurosis or worse in patients – can't be the preferred default for a progressive posterity, no matter how 'playfully creative' & 'polyphonic' things become. You can still be courted, even haunted, by the "deep polytheistic heritage of mythical images", once their original identity has been unmasked.

Hillman's conception of a 'polytheistic soul' adapts the apparent polytheism* in myth to his fixation on the 'multiplicity of the psyche', whose acceptance as a model may therapeutically prevent us from tragically living out 'our fragmentation' in society. A multiplicity of simultaneous impressions, however, not dissimilar from the intellectually astute 'constellation of ideas' – Varro, Vico, Pound – or the unbridled 'free association' of image & language (either cultivated poetically or stimulated psychotropically).

* Polytheism in myth is like saying we're polydexterous because we have five fingers on each hand. The many gods in ancient myth are merely different aspects of the same 'god' (the lunation).

"A polytheistic psychology...provides its imagistic formulation **in the major traditional language of our civilization, ie, classical mythology.** *By providing a divine background of personages and powers for each complex, polytheistic psychology would find place for each spark. It would aim less at gathering them into a unity and more at integrating each fragment according to its own principle, giving each god its due over that portion of consciousness, that symptom, complex, fantasy, which calls for an archetypal background. It would accept the multiplicity of voices, the Babel of the anima and animus, without insisting upon unifying them into one figure, and accept too the dissolution process into diversity as equal in value to the*

coagulation process into unity. **The pagan gods and goddesses would be *restored* to their psychological domain***....Focus upon the many and the different (rather than upon the one and the same) also provides a variety of ways of looking at one psychic condition* [James Hillman, 'Polytheism' in *A Blue Fire*, p39, emphasis added]*."*

He further notes that *"By returning family back to mythological figures, Freud performed an* epistrophé [reorientation]. *He reimagined our desires, our phobias, our childhoods. He relocated the human world in the mythical imagination* [James Hillman, 'Mythology as Family' in *A Blue Fire*, p206]*."* Emphasizing the presumption that myth originated in the imagination – although that emphasis was arguably aimed at foregrounding 'the imagination', not adducing evidence for the origin of myth. Nevertheless, the newly revealed scientific origin of myth, renders 'the *relocation* of the human world in the mythical imagination' a mistake founded on a faulty presumption.

"We see here that Hillman makes a divergence from the classical Analytical Psychology from the outset. Hillman is building the basis of a psychology that views the inner world & outer world through the lens of myth & poetry. Hillman bases the entirety of his psychology not on science but on the æsthetic & poetic basis of the soul. He views consciousness as a thin layer of literalism that is depriving the soul of much needed meaning & experience. In essence, Hillman is seeking to harness the power of imagination & the image to bring a true & profound meaning to life. Therefore, psychology stands apart from science, moral philosophy, & religion in that it is **a discipline of the imaginative activity of the soul.** *Hillman wants us to be forced by the images. Rather than interpret a dream, Hillman prefers to let the dream interpret us. This approach gives imagination absolute priority over ego understandings & applications. The idea of a poetic basis of mind is a radical one, moving consciousness away from heroics toward a more receptive & malleable posture* [*A Blue Fire* by James Hillman reviewed for the Center of Applied Jungian Studies by Stephen Farah]."

In contrast, Francis Bacon considered & rejected personal or poetic interpretations of myth, in his pioneering tabulation of knowledge, maintaining that myth comprised universal allegorical instruction (for example, he interpreted the Sphinx as an allegory for Science – because both pose complex riddles). *"The earliest Antiquity lies buried in Silence and Oblivion; excepting the Remains we have of it in sacred Writ.* This silence was succeeded by Poetical Fables; and these, at length, by the Writings we now enjoy; so that the concealed and secret Learning of the Ancients, seems separated from the History of Knowledge of the following Ages, by a Veil, or Partition-Wall of Fables, interposing between the Things that are lost, and those that remain. Many may imagine that I am here entring upon a Work of Fancy, or Amusement; and design to use a Poetical Liberty, in explaining Poetical Fables. 'Tis true, Fables in general are composed of ductile Matter, that may be drawn into great Variety, by a witty Talent, or an inventive Genius; and be delivered of plausible Meanings which they never contain'd. But this Procedure has already been carried to excess: and great numbers, to procure the Sanction of Antiquity to their own Notions and Inventions, have miserably wrested and abused the Fables of the Ancients. Nor is this only a late or unfrequent Practice; but of ancient date, and common, even to this day. Thus Chrysippus, like an Interpreter of Dreams, attributed the Opinions of the Stoicks to the Poets of old; and the Chemists, at present, more childishly apply the Poetical Transformations to their Experiments of the Furnace. And tho' I have well weighed and considered all this; and thoroughly seen into the Levity which the Mind indulges for Allegories and Allusions; yet I cannot but retain a high Value for the ancient Mythology. And certainly, it were very injudicious to suffer the fondness and licentiousness of a few, to detract from the honour of Allegory and Parable in general. This would be rash, and almost prophane: for, since Religion delights in such Shadows and Disguises; to abolish them were, in manner, to prohibit all Intercourse betwixt Things divine and human. Upon deliberate Consideration, my Judgment is, that a concealed Instruction and Allegory was originally intended in many of the ancient Fables* [Bacon, 'The Mythology or Concealed Knowledge of the Ancients Decyphered and Explained', pp545/6]*."*

* For example, the 'Holy Writ' summoned by Luther in his scriptural condemnation of the cosmology of Copernicus as *"the new astronomer who wants to prove that the Earth goes round, and not the heavens, the Sun, and the Moon; just as if someone sitting in a moving wagon or ship were to suppose that he was at rest, and that the Earth and the trees were moving past him. But that is the way nowadays; whoever wants to be clever must needs produce something of his own, which is bound to be the best since* he *has produced it! The fool will turn the whole science of Astronomy upside down.* **But as Holy Writ declares, it was the Sun and not the Earth which Joshua commanded to stand still** [quoted by Angus Armitage in *Sun, Stand Thou Still: The Life and Work of Copernicus the Astronomer,* 1947: Henry Schuman, p116]."

Among the early modern approaches, 19th-century anthropologists compared ancient myths to popular folklore, seeking clues to their origin in the parallel customs of contemporary primitive cultures – premised on a 'unilinear view of evolution' (structured as a ladder of ascending cultures merely in different stages of arrested development). Prehistoric man, for example, was theoretically on the lowest rung of intellectual development, susceptible to believing his dreams were 'reality'. (A view with negative repercussions for the history of ideas.) The philologists meanwhile chased language instead of custom, seeking meaning through comparative mythology – concluding initially with the universal motif of 'the Solar Hero'; & ultimately with the theory that the myths encode 'knowledge of the 25,920-year cycle of axial precession'.

"To recapitulate, for clarity, whatever is true, myth has no historical basis, however tempting the reduction, however massive & well armed the impact of a good deal of modern criticism on that belief. The attempt to reduce myth to history is the so-called 'euhemerist' trend, from the name of Euhemeros, the first debunker. It was a wave of fashion which is now receding, for it was too simpleminded to last. **Myth is essentially cosmological.** *As heaven in the cosmos is so vastly more important than our earth, it should not be surprising to find the main functions deriving from heaven. To identify them under* a variety of appearances *is a matter of mythological judgment, of the capacity to recognize essential forms through patient sifting of the immense amount of material* [Giorgio de Santillana & Hertha von Dechend, 'History, Myth & Reality' in *Hamlet's Mill: An Essay on Myth & the Frame of Time,* 1969: Gambit, p50]."

This particular cosmological approach focused on the *astronomical* significance of the zodiac – which later gave rise to astrology – oblivious to the possibility that the myths may alternately have referred to lunar phases in their "variety of appearances". For example, the authors mistook the Seven Sages for the Seven Stars of the 'big dipper' in attempting to extract a cosmological model of myth from the stars;* a mistake – together with their pivotal thesis on the 'axial precession of the equinoxes' – that has driven countless followers down the wrong winding road. A dead end – at least in its conclusion – wound in a mythical mill, quern, spindle, axle or Sampo pole (representing the earth's axis), to churn the astronomical dial of time like a whirlpool, spinning top or cosmic wheel. Though their thesis purported to unmask the stellar identities of mythical gods throughout the ancient world, they stopped at the Bible (with the exception of Samson), referring to it as "that most unscientific of records", when, as shown below in Part Two, even *its* accounts – including the exploits of mighty Samson – prove scientifically lunar.

* This identification is supplemented with 'the seven circles of the known planets', divided into three inner & three outer rings (with the Sun at the centre): *Phainōn* ("shining one" Saturn, completing its circle in 30 years); *Phæthōn* ("radiant one" Jupiter, completing its circle in 12 years); *Purveis* ("fiery one" Mars, 2 years 5 months); *Hesperos* ("evening star") / *Heosphoros* ("dawn-bringer") Venus, completing its transit in a year; *Stilbōn* ("gleaming one" Mercury, its circuit said to be a year); & the Moon (completing its circuit in 27½ days, & its conjunction with the Sun in 30) – *Cleomedes' Lectures on Astronomy,* pp39/40. It bears adding that several of the planets were perceived to move at times against the sphere of the cosmos – *ie,* from west to east (*planete* = "wanderer"). Geminos adds, *"Circles having the same centre as the sphere are called great circles on the sphere. There are seven great circles*

[that we have mentioned]: the equator, the zodiac with the [circle] through the middles of the signs, the [circles] through the poles, the horizon for each place, the meridian, the Milky Way [Geminos, *Introduction to* The Phenomena *of Aratus,* p160]."

The competing 19th-century models advanced by anthropologists & philologists had largely been disrupted by Freud & the psychological model, before this astronomical revival of hyperdiffusionism spun its yarn on the impressionable '60s. Advocates of all three models continue to hold the field to varying degrees as far as consensus goes, though their theories & arguments (however persuasive) all lack proof. The advantage of the lunar thesis is that the abundance of evidence supporting it, is further corroborated by verifiable proof (embedded in the myths themselves).

So what were the myths really about?

First, the gods in myth weren't gods. This doesn't necessarily mean there's no god; but it does show that the 'gods' in myth – & more critically, 'god' in the Bible – conclusively referred to something other than a divine Creator.

When the names of 'gods' appear in myths, they consistently refer to 'focal lunar phases'; confirming that the myths were 'extended calendar narratives' based on three models of lunar measure – narratives meant to be read with those models in mind. In contrast, literal readings of the myths by descendants who were unaware of this, led ingenuously to the fatal emergence of 'religion' – no less incomprehensible ultimately than the myths themselves had initially appeared to these same credulous literalists.

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen [Hebrews XI:1]."

A suspension of disbelief that much later led to esoteric emulations of faith in secret (*ie,* sacred) societies, rising from the suspicion that there must originally have been a more comprehensible spiritual tradition (*prisca theologia*) revealing insights that religion failed to deliver.

"Yet in this vanity some of the moderns have with extreme levity indulged so far as to attempt to found a system of natural philosophy on the first chapter of Genesis, on the book of Job, & other parts of the sacred writings, seeking for the dead among the living; which also makes the inhibition & repression of it the more important, because from this unwholesome mixture of things human & divine there arises not only a fantastic philosophy but also an heretical religion [Bacon, 'Aphorism 65']."

The authors of the myths focused on physics rather than metaphysics. The highly complex 'movements' of the moon through its three dominant cycles, produced 'a developing narrative tradition' involving cryptic refinements of lunar measure, intended to preserve hard-won insights across countless millennia, in an allegorically narrative framework. Those who dismiss the possibility, ignore the fact that it wasn't until 1919 that lunar mechanics were finally predictable with precision – the complexity of lunar motion requiring extended equations involving 1500 variables to reliably predict those mechanics (*see* Ernest William Brown, *Tables of the Motion of the Moon,* 1919: Yale, three volumes).

Rather than inevitably leading to the concept of the 'collective unconscious' – *"every phase of imagery & symbolism which the mind of the race has used in its progress to abstract conceptual thought"* – the percolation of myth throughout humanity has now been conclusively shown to trace the history of an ongoing global quest for accurate mathematical measurement of the three lunar cycles (the lunation, course cycle & phase cycle). In other words, the permeation of mythic tropes & codified figures throughout history, were cryptically *introduced* into consciousness by a rigorous scientific tradition, before they became 'native' to the imagination.

Which revisits Plato's distinction between an immutable 'eternal reality' & the 'generated phenomena' of our sensible realm 'perpetually in a state of becoming' (endlessly perishing before ever actually 'existing'). The ancient architects of myth sought precise measurements of the perpetual lunar cycles, in pursuit of an accurate lunisolar calendar; not transcendent ideals.

Historically incoherent mythic remains from the Palæolithic era to the Bible all consistently grow coherent in the light of lunar measure – a previously untested thesis which conclusively resolves too many ancient mysteries from unrelated cultures & ages to remain conjectural. The abundance of evidence supporting the thesis is bolstered by verifiable proof – numbers & measures embedded in the myths & art to corroborate the viability of 'lunar interpretation' mathematically. Numbers & measures which in fact comprise 'the core of the myths', to which the narratives were clearly *appended*. Proofs presenting a numerate explanation of ancient myth, without resorting to ciphers (as in *The Bible Code*) or the abstruse numerology of gematria & kabbalah, but by computing the key numbers 'included in the tales as clues' by the authors themselves, bearing lunar measure in mind.

Unsolved mysteries in the Bible – in addition to the Greek, Egyptian, Sumerian & MesoAmerican myths, among others – all cohere in a single uniform model. A model moreover that also illuminates art from the Palæolithic & Neolithic eras – pointing to a continuous, more pervasive tradition than ever previously suspected. A thesis whose ultimate revision of history discards faulty metaphysical preconceptions; liberating posterity from the divisive adherence to 'spirit', 'soul', 'god' & 'afterlife'.

Further to questioning 'religion as a divine undertaking', the lunar thesis also challenges the linguistic postulate of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) who maintained that 'the associative bond between signifier & signified is arbitrary'. Yet key letters of the Alphabet – our fundamental abstraction – 'bond' in three demonstrable respects with the focal phases of the lunation: [1] Formal: each letter is a copy of its corresponding phase; [2] Ordinal: both fall in the same place in their respective sequences; & [3] Spectral: they represent the only phases in the lunation identifiable on sight. For example, the third letter 'C' copies the phase that emerges on the third night of the lunation (waxing crescent); the ninth letter (theta), the half-moon on the ninth night; & the 15th letter 'O', first full moon on the 15th night, *etc* (see Part Two for the full account).

In this respect, the Alphabet proves to be a serial mnemonic recollecting an objective natural sequence – not an arbitrary construct. Which not only belies the conceit adhered to by pedagogical typographers like Eric Gill – who insisted that *"letters are things, not pictures of things"* – but also revokes the licence synchronists drew from Saussure, in discarding objective diachronic meaning. Their emphasis on subjectivity augmenting psychological sophistry.

Anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss – who recognized that Saussure's linguistic precept might help explain the problem of 'meaning in myth' – focused on the 'levels of language' employed (systemic grammar vs idiomatic usage), noting that myth's *"substance does not lie in its style, its original music, or its syntax, but in the story which it tells".* He sought to resolve the question, *"if the content of a myth is contingent* [*ie,* variable], *how are we going to explain that throughout the world myths do resemble one another so much?"* But a linguistic analysis of 'the component parts of myth' employing conventional interpretations, ignores the possibility that its terms may have imported 'their puzzling significance' from an observable though unrevealed model – its symbols *coded* to images in that covert model ('deities' signifying lunar phases). Deciphering myth requires little more than a knowledge of the language of lunar measure, an eye for pattern & a willingness to crunch the numbers.

While the ethical focus of 'myths as paradigms of ideal or universal values' fastens on the action & interactions within the tales, linguistic access largely focuses on etymological clues in names & places, seeking associative characteristics that might potentially shed light on comparable figures. Entertaining myth as 'a darkening shadow that language throws upon thought' – inferred from 'the inherent ambiguity

of language' – has repeatedly turned the linguistic focus to 'myth as figures of creative or poetic play' (simile, metaphor, puns etc); in effect, language making fun of its host, or 'myth as mental defect'. Yet the possibility that such figurative language might cohere rationally in a natural model, appears too far-fetched to parole from the margins of serious study.

Among the three levels of mentation (pathic, iconic & noetic) – which roughly parallel the three modes of information processing (neurological, conceptual & linguistic) – the *representational* aspect of symbols summons a 'simplistic or direct association' (pathic & iconic); while constructs of *allegorical* abstraction invoke a more conceptual noetic projection. And 'numeracy' adds an *overtone* of 'measure' to image & language, *underscoring* pattern – not unlike metrical counterpoint in poetry, which registers (among those focused primarily on narrative) largely *subliminally*.

The distinction between representative & oneiric referents was emphasized by such modern scholars as Panofsky, Gombrich, Praz, *et al* in a psychological campaign intent on substantiating the Platonic intimation of a moral significance underlying 'deeper image'. They turned the belief that 'insights into an ideal realm might be retrievable from the symbols representing divinatory reflection', into a phenomenological pursuit of 'ancient predisposition' – oblivious to the possibility that an alternative to 'moral exegesis' might obtain.

The fact that earlier scholars (such as Plotinus & Ficino) had also interpreted the ancient myths & symbols anagogically – affirming the Platonic conceit – gave modern scholars greater reason to read their psychological archetypes *into* the texts & contexts of metallic cultures. However – apart from the recognition that ancient iconography demands an allegorical rather than a literal interpretation – the refinement of interpretive modes (analogical, tropological & anagogical) yet failed to make clear distinction between perceptual & conceptual tropes. In other words, defining poetic interpretation in moral or ethical terms infantilizes a mnemonic art of Measure whose methods gave birth not only to philosophy & psychology but also science.

Humanity's been crippled by myth & misunderstanding for millennia, religious conflict responsible for the endless slaughter of countless innocents back to the beginning of history. Conflict far more attributable to religion than to the putative 'imperial quest for power & resources' routinely tendered in explanation by materialist historians (who remain oblivious to the unsuspected scientific motivation of 'enlightened heirs' arguably intent on restoring the desecrated lunar ideals of 'observant forefathers').

Questioned by the brutal inquisitors of Henry VIII before her execution, Protestant poet Anne Askew (1521–46) ridiculed the divinity of the Eucharist with the indignant riposte, 'If the host should fall & a beast consume it, would he receive God or not?' Yet the King had denied the authority of a divine intercessor more than a decade earlier, in breaking with Rome & laying the foundations of the Anglican faith, which proved so much less inimical to Luther, Calvin et al, than the indulgences of the Pope. Her protestations against the superstition of Transubstantiation, nevertheless, sealed her fate. Sectarian conflict down the ages, has forever been the result of conflicting interpretations of 'enigmatic ancient writ', which – as illustrated in the lunar solutions to previously unsolved biblical mysteries concerning Noah, Moses, David & Jesus – consistently conforms to the model of lunar measure (rather than addressing historical figures or divine ideals). Mercilessly racked & broken by her tormentors, Anne remains one of only two women known to have been tortured in the Tower of London – a fate emblematic of how misguided 'sacrifice at the altar of faith' can become (immolating even the most vulnerable among us). Yet it was the idea that 'Transubstantiation is a superstition' that needed stamping out – conflicting interpretations of biblical myth, indelibly at the heart of religious strife.

While anthropologists seek clues in the 'living mythology' of contemporary primitive cultures – on the supposition that it sustains primordial conditions – the point to consider is that the myths of ancient Sumer, Greece, Egypt, India, China, Mesoamerica & Melanesia, while intellectually absorbing, haven't

caused the problems the world's faced these past two millennia. That distinction falls to the Bible (& its offshoots), a book whose misunderstanding cries out desperately for explication. In the face of mounting religious intolerance (thanks to the internet) our survival increasingly depends on setting the biblical record straight – which the lunar thesis has shown it does.

Where's the proof?

As this paper's already too long, the evidence supporting the lunar thesis is collected in Part Two of *Œdipus & the Science of Myth,* subtitled *Proof that the Bible Is Not About God*. Anyone able to do simple math will see that 'the proofs supporting the evidence' confirm the hypothesis that ancient myth was based on lunar measure.

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